Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NuMenus)

NuMenus is a computer-based menu planning system which allows menus to be planned that meet nutrition standards. Software specifically designed to comply with all program requirements provides technical support to analyze and to modify menus if they do not comply with the standards. Because the software allows direct measurement of the nutrient content of the meals, it is not necessary to have food component or quantity requirements. In order to facilitate identification of those meals that are eligible for Federal reimbursement, meals must contain at least three menu items: an entree, fluid milk, and a side dish. There is considerable flexibility to determine what constitutes an entree and a side dish.

Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (Assisted NuMenus)

Assisted NuMenus is designed for those schools that do not have the technical resources to implement NuMenus but want to take advantage of some of its features. This option allows SFAs to use the expertise of outside entities, such as other SFAs, the State Office or a consultant, to develop a menu cycle, recipes, procurement specifications, and preparation methods that will allow the school to produce meals that meet the nutrition standards. Meals must be produced according to the specifications developed by the outside entity. Any changes made by the SFA need to be reanalyzed to assure that the nutrient standards are met. *NuMenus: A Resource Guide*, developed by USDA, offers five-week cycle menus for lunch and breakfast and is available from USDA. This resource includes production records, preparation and inventory pull lists, recipes, product specifications, and nutrient analyses for the cycle menus.

Program Requirements: NuMenus and Assisted NuMenus

NuMenus and Assisted NuMenus are Nutrient Based Menu Systems and, as such, allow any foods in any quantities to meet the nutrition goals. With Food Based Menus, foods from specific food groups and in specific quantities must be offered. The nutrition goals require meeting the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) for breakfast (¼ RDA) and lunch (⅓ RDA), age appropriate calorie goals, and the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

Nutrient Standards are the required level of calories and nutrients for a specific grade or age group.

The Nutrient Standards for lunch are set for these grade groups:

- Preschool
- Grades K–6
- Grades 7–12
- Plus an optional standard for grades K–3

School lunches shall provide the minimum calorie and nutrient levels for each of the required grade groups as shown in Table 1, Section 12A. These minimums should be achieved in meals averaged over a school week.

The Nutrient Standards for breakfast are set for these grade groups:

- Preschool
- Grades K–12
- Plus an optional standard for grades 7–12

School breakfasts shall provide the minimum calorie and nutrient levels for each of the required grade groups as shown in Table 2, Section 12A. These minimums should also be achieved in meals averaged over a school week.

Table 1 Section 12D. Optional Age Nutrient Standards for NSMP Lunch

Nutrients and Energy Allowances	Ages 3–6	Ages 7–10	Ages 11–13	Ages 14 and above
Energy Allowance/Calories	558	667	783	846
Total Fat (as a percent of actual total food energy)[1]	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Saturated Fat (as a percent of actual total food energy)[2]	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)
RDA for Protein (g)	7.3	9.3	15.0	16.7
RDA for Calcium (mg)	267.0	267.0	400.0	400.0
RDA for Iron (mg)	3.3	3.3	4.5	4.5
RDA for Vitamin A (RE)	158.0	233.0	300.0	300.0
RDA for Vitamin C (mg)	14.6	15.0	16.7	19.2

[1] Not to exceed 30 percent over a school week
[2] Less than 10 percent over a school week

Table 2 Section 12D. Optional Age Nutrient Standards for NSMP Breakfast

Nutrients and Energy Allowances	Ages 3–6	Ages 7–10	Ages 11–13	Ages 14 and above
Energy Allowance/Calories	419	500	588	625
Total Fat (as a percent of actual total food energy)[1]	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Saturated Fat (as a percent of actual total food energy)[2]	(2)	(2)	(2)	(2)
RDA for Protein (g)	5.5	7.0	11.25	12.5
RDA for Calcium (mg)	200.0	200.0	300.0	300.0
RDA for Iron (mg)	2.5	2.5	3.4	3.4
RDA for Vitamin A (RE)	119.0	175.0	225.0	225.0
RDA for Vitamin C (mg)	11.0	11.25	12.5	14.4

[1] Not to exceed 30 percent over a school week
[2] Less than 10 percent over a school week

Optional Age Groups

Schools have the option to provide the calorie and nutrient levels for lunches and breakfasts for these age groups:

- Ages 3–6
- Ages 7–10
- Ages 11–13
- Ages 14–17

Optional Age Nutrient Standards for Numenus - Lunch and Breakfast are shown in Table 1 and 2, Section 12D.

Selecting the Correct Nutrient Standard

Not all schools' grade structures will match the Nutrient Standard grade or age groups.

SFAs may develop their own customized nutrient standard groups corresponding to the age or grade groups in their school(s). At least two Nutrient Standards should be used with any school that has grades K–12. Where such a broad spectrum of ages and grades are present, the standard should be changed at or right above the sixth grade level.

If only one age or grade is outside the specified group, a school or group of schools may use the Nutrient Standard level for the majority of children. However, when more than one grade or age is outside of the specified group, the menu planner should use two of the required groups or develop a customized age/grade group.

For example, when using the required grade groups chart, if there is more than one grade beyond grade 6 or below grade 7 in a particular school, two grade groups for lunch should be used. Grade K–8 or grade 5–8 schools should have at least two grade groups for menu planning.

Example 1

Somewhere Elementary serves grades K–8. Two nutrient standards should be used for this school. The K–6 nutrient standard would be used for the grades K–6 and the 7–12 nutrient standard would be used for grades 7 and 8.

Example 2

Somewhere Middle School serves students in grades 5–8. Two nutrient standards should be used for this school. The K–6 nutrient standard would be used for grades 5 and 6, the 7–12 nutrient standard would be used for grades 7 and 8.

Grade K–7 or grade 6–9 schools, could include the one grade outside the group using the K–6 nutrient standard and 7–12 grade groups nutrient standard, respectively.

If the SFA plans centralized menus for several schools with grades within the K–6 range, even though the schools have varying age or grade groups, all of the menus may be planned for the grades K–6 nutrient standard.

Example 3

Anywhere SFA plans the menu for all three of the elementary schools in the SFA. One school serves students in grades K–6; one pre-K–4; and the other K–5. Menus for these schools can be planned using the nutrient standard for grades K–6. However, if each school is allowed to plan its own menu, then menu planning and nutrient analysis will need to be done for each school site.

Optional age groups

For schools using the age grouping chart the groups are adjusted by creating additional Nutrient Standards for other age categories by weighting, combining and/or averaging the RDA for different age groups.

Special consideration at age 11

The greatest differential in caloric needs occurs between ages 10–11 or between grades 5–6. A one-year age difference does not make a great difference in the RDA requirements for each nutrient when weighted for the predominant group. However, when several ages are added in on either side of the 10–11 age break, either too few nutrients and calories will be provided for those 11+

years or too many calories and fat will be provided for those 10 years and under.

The Nutrient Standards developed by the SFA for customized grade and age groups must be added to the approved nutrient analysis software system. However, the nutrient standards specified by USDA will already be in any software that has been approved by USDA.

Weekly Averages

Planned menus will be analyzed over a school week using an approved nutrient analysis software system based on the projected servings of each menu item.

School Week Definition

A school week is defined as a minimum of three consecutive days and a maximum of seven consecutive days. If there are fewer than three consecutive days in a week (from Sunday to Saturday), menus may be combined with either the previous or the following week.

For example, when there are only two days of school during the week of Thanksgiving, those two days could be combined with either the week before or the week after Thanksgiving. Table 3, Section 12D illustrates this choice.

Weighted/Unweighted Nutrient Analysis

Planned menus will be analyzed and compared to the appropriate Nutrient Standard using weighted or unweighted (simple averages) based on the projected servings of each menu item and condiment.

Weighted nutrient analysis is an option, not a requirement, in South Carolina. Schools may choose to analyze menus based on the number of servings planned (weighted) or they may give

Table 3 Section 12D. School Week Definition

For determining school week, choose:

November 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, and 22 (seven days)

November				
M	T	W	Th	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	Holidays		
28	29	30	1	2

OR

November 21, 22, 28, 29, 30 and December 1 and 2 (seven days).

November				
M	T	W	Th	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	Holidays		
28	29	30	1	2

equal weight to each menu item (unweighted or simple averages).

Unweighted Averages

If you are not weighting your menu analysis and are offering choices from different food groupings, you will need to determine a projected number of portions for menu items.

Use this procedure:

1. Divide the total number of projected meals by the number of food item choices in each food group.
2. Multiply the answer times the number of food items allowed to be chosen.
3. This answer becomes the "projected servings" for each food item. The number will be the same for each food item in a food group but may be different for each food group depending on the number of choices within that food group.

This procedure should be done for each food group. See Table 4, Section 12D for an example of the application of this procedure.

Weighted Averages

Determining Projected Servings for Weighted Averages

1. The nutrition analysis program will calculate nutrients and provide a production sheet based on projected servings.
2. Estimate the number for projected servings based on past production records and meal counts.

See Table 5, Section 12D for an example of the application of this procedure.

Combining Breakfast and Lunch Nutrient Standards

Table 4 Section 12D.
Determining Projected Servings for Unweighted (Simple Averages) Choice Menu
(Projected Meals = 900)

Student Choices	Menu (Food Group)	Projected Servings	Steps necessary to get Projected Servings for computer entry.
Select One	Chicken Nuggets Fish Fillet Spaghetti/Meat Sauce	300 300 300	900 projected meals divided by 3 food item choices = 300 projected servings for each food item in this food group.
Select Two	French Fries Green Beans Tossed Salad Applesauce Orange Juice	360 360 360 360 360	900 projected meals divided by 5 food item choices = 180 servings 180 x 2 food item choices = 360 projected servings for each food item in this food group.
Select One	Dinner Roll Hamburger Bun Garlic Bread	300 300 300	900 projected meals divided by 3 food item choices = 300 projected servings for each food item in this food group.
Select One	2% Milk 1% Choc Milk Nonfat Milk	300 300 300	900 projected meals divided by 3 food item choices = 300 projected servings for each food item in this food group.

Table 5 Section 12D.
Determining Projected Servings for Weighted Averages Choice Menu
(Projected Meals = 900)

Student Choices	Menu (Food Group)	Projected Servings	Determining Projected Servings for Weighted Averages
Select One	Chicken Nuggets Fish Fillet Spaghetti/Meat Sauce	600 100 200	1. Estimate the number for projected servings based on past production records and meal counts. 2. The nutrient analysis software program will calculate nutrients based on averages from projected serving numbers entered.
Select Two	French Fries Green Beans Tossed Salad Applesauce Orange Juice	875 380 125 150 210	
Select One	Dinner Roll Hamburger Bun Garlic Bread	400 100 300	
Select One	2% Milk 1% Choc Milk Nonfat Milk	150 700 50	

NuMenus and Assisted NuMenus allow schools the option to combine the total nutrients for breakfast and lunch together in proportion to the participation in each meal. Your software system may have the capability to combine the breakfast and lunch analysis in proportion to your participation. This is an optional feature of USDA-approved software and may not be in all nutrient analysis software.

Approved Software and Database

When performing nutrient analysis in NuMenus, the school must use USDA-approved software. USDA-approved software uses the National Nutrient Database for Child Nutrition Programs (NNDCNP). A list of approved software is available from the South Carolina Department of Education, Office of School Food Services and Nutrition.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Can weighted averages be done at the SFA level or must it be done on a school-by-school basis?

A: The SFA will do weighted averaging at the SFA level if they use central menus. They will need a system to aggregate the data on the amounts that will be prepared for reimbursable student meals from the individual schools. If meal planning is done at the individual school level, weighting would be based on the amounts prepared for reimbursable student meals at that school.

Standardized Recipes and Preparation Techniques

In the planning and serving of NuMenus, standardized recipes and preparation techniques must be used. In order to qualify as a standardized recipe, a recipe must have an established and specified yield, portion size, and quantity. In addition, the ingredients must be constant in measure and preparation. Examples of standardized recipes include the *USDA Quantity Recipes for Schools* and the *New School Lunch and Breakfast Recipes-A Tool Kit for Healthy School Meals*. Schools may also use local or State standardized recipes.

Processed Foods

When processed foods are used in NuMenus, the nutrient analysis of these products must either be in the National Nutrient Database for Child Nutrition Programs or entered into the SFA's local database. The nutrient analysis of the actual product must be used.

A Nutrient Analysis or a "Nutrient Fact Label" must be requested from the manufacturer or broker of any processed foods used when there is no comparable food already listed in the database, including commodity foods sent for processing. Request the nutrient analysis as part of your bid specifications. This nutrition information must then be added to the nutrient analysis software. (Contact the software supplier or software manual for directions on how to add this product information to your software).

Menu Item Definition

NuMenus deal with menu items instead of food components and food items. A menu item may be any single food or combination of foods. In NuMenus, meals are required to have three menu items for lunch and for breakfast.

Table 6 Section 12D.
Lunch Menu Category Examples

Hamburger on a Bun	Entree
Fruit Salad	Side Dish
Oatmeal Raisin Cookie	Side Dish
Fluid Milk Choices	Milk

Lunch

The three categories of menu items for lunch are:

- Entree
- Milk
- Sides Dishes (Any other food except a food of minimal nutritional value)

Examples of these menu items are shown in Table 6, Section 12D. The determination of whether a food can be counted as one menu item or two depends on how it is served. If it is served as one item, it is counted as one item. If it is served as two items, it is counted as two items. All menu items must be offered prior to the point of service.

Entree

An entree is a menu item that is a combination of foods or a single food that is served as the main course.

To determine if an entree can be counted as one menu item or more than one menu item when it consists of a combination of foods, look at the way it is served. If an entree contains a combination of foods and some of these foods belong to different food groups (i.e., meat, bread, fruits and vegetables, milk, etc.), each food should not be counted as a separate menu item but as part of the entree (one menu item total).

For example, if a menu planner traditionally serves turkey with gravy over mashed potatoes, then the turkey, gravy, and mashed potatoes are considered the entree—one menu item. To make two menu items, serve the potatoes on the side as a separate item.

Table 7 Section 12D. Counting Menu Items

One Item	Two Items
Hamburger served on a Bun	Hamburger patty served separate from Bun
Turkey and Gravy served on Mashed Potatoes	Turkey and Gravy served separately from Mashed Potatoes
Burrito Grande (Tortilla, Meat, Rice, Tomato, Lettuce, Salsa) served together	Burrito served separately from Spanish Rice

Milk

Schools are required to offer fluid milk as a beverage. Schools are also required to offer a variety of fluid milk consistent with children's preferences in the prior year. If a type of milk represents less than 1 percent of the total amount of milk consumed in the previous year, the school may elect not to offer that type of milk for lunch.

To assist in meeting the goal of 30 percent calories from fat, the serving of lowfat (2 percent and 1 percent) or skim milk is encouraged. Milk can be flavored or unflavored.

Side Dishes and Condiments

Any other menu item offered is considered a side dish unless it is a condiment.

While condiments must be taken into consideration when planning and analyzing for nutrients, they are not counted as menu items for the purpose of meeting the minimum requirement of three menu items for lunch and breakfast.

Condiments include such items as relishes, catsup, mustard, jelly, gravies, whipped toppings, and table spreads.

In NuMenus there is no "beverage" menu item category—"milk" is the menu item. If the SFA wants to offer beverages in addition to milk, these beverages must be offered as one of the side dish choices that are part of the school's unit-priced meal. They may not be offered as a choice against milk.

The SFA's policy should be clearly publicized so students understand their options.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: When using NuMenus, and a menu item is Turkey and Gravy on Potatoes, would this still count as an entree if the gravy was not served? If the potato was not served?

A: Because this item is served as one menu item (potatoes topped with turkey and gravy), it would not count as an entree if the potatoes were missing. If it were served as two separate menu items (Turkey and Gravy, Mashed Potatoes), then the turkey alone would be the entree (however, if it is served separately it would also be considered two menu items for offer versus serve and could affect the number of items the student would be required to choose). Gravy is considered a condiment, so the menu item would still count as an entree if it were served without gravy.

2. Q: What foods could be considered an entree when using NuMenus?

A: An entree may be a combination of foods or a single food item that is offered as the main course. Nowhere in the regulations does it state that an entree must contribute the majority of the calories of a reimbursable meal.

Breakfast

The three categories of menu items for breakfast are:

- Fluid milk served as a beverage
- Any two other foods except a food of minimal nutritional value.

There is no requirement for an entree for breakfast. All menu items must be offered prior to the point of service. Table 8, Section 12D shows examples of breakfast menu items.

Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value

Schools using NuMenus or Assisted NuMenus are required to comply with the foods of minimal nutritional value rule.

Inclusion in nutrient analysis

If a food of minimal nutritional value is a part of a menu item, the nutritional contribution is counted when the nutritional analysis of the meal is calculated (for example, marshmallows on sweet potato casserole). The food of minimal nutritional value should only be a garnish or incidental part of the menu item; in no case can it be more than 50 percent of the menu item.

Table 8 Section 12D.
Breakfast Menu Category Examples

Egg Stratta	Menu Item 1
Orange Juice	Menu Item 2
Fluid Milk Choices	Milk

Theme Bars

Salad bars and other theme bars such as pasta bars, taco bars, potato bars, etc., may be served in NuMenus and are considered reimbursable lunches when they consist of:

- An entree or menu item that is the main course.
- Fluid milk, served as a beverage.
- Side dishes (any other food except a food of minimal nutritional value).

For ease of analysis menu planners should make an analysis of their salad/theme bar as a recipe. Schools that have more than one typical salad/theme bar need to make several averaged analyses (one for each type of bar) so that each one is represented. The theme bar recipes are treated as another menu choice and averaged into the weekly nutrient analysis based on projected servings.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Is there a certain amount of creditable food that must be combined with foods of minimum nutritional value before it is considered creditable?

A: The food of minimal nutritional value should only be a garnish or incidental part of the menu item; in no case can it be more than 50 percent of the menu item.

Field Trips

Menus for field trip lunches may be incorporated into the menu analysis of the day they are served along with the regularly scheduled menu items. The field trip meals will be averaged into the overall week's menu analysis just as if they were meals served on a school campus.

Requirements for Reimbursable Meals Under Offer Versus Serve (NuMenus)

Offer versus serve is a serving method designed to reduce food waste and food costs in school meal programs without jeopardizing the nutritional integrity of the meals served.

National School Lunch Program

- Minimum of three menu items offered.
- Required in grades 9–12; optional below that level.
- Must select at least two items, one of the items must be an entree.
- If four or more items are offered, the student may decline no more than two.

School Breakfast Program

- Minimum of three menu items must be offered, one must be milk.
- Must select at least two items.
- Decline a maximum of one item.
- Offer versus serve is determined by the SFA.

The breakfast/lunch must be priced as a unit regardless of the number of menu items selected by the student.

Under offer versus serve a student may decline food items that he/she does not intend to eat. When a full portion of a food item is declined, a smaller portion may be offered. Offering smaller portions is not mandatory and is a local decision. Only full portions of menu items may be credited toward meeting the requirements for reimbursable meals.

Counting Menu Items for Offer Versus Serve

Students may be offered a variety of menu items and choices for each menu item at each meal. The meal planner establishes what constitutes a reimbursable meal from among the various menu items and choices in menu items that are offered.

Table 9, Section 12D illustrates various combinations of menu items which qualify as a reimbursable meal with offer versus serve at a senior high school.

In this example, the menu planner determines that the entree, milk, one serving each of a side dish, bread, and dessert (five menu items) constitute a reimbursable meal. Under offer versus serve—since more than three menu items are offered—the student may only decline two items. Therefore, the student must select at a minimum three menu items (the entree and two other menu items) to have a reimbursable meal.

Choices

While multiple choices may be offered for various menu items, the number of choices does not affect the number of menu items that the menu planner establishes as comprising a reimbursable lunch or breakfast.

The meal planner must assure that daily lunch or breakfast menus meet the requirement of having the correct number of menu items. The weekly menu must meet the requirements of the Nutrient Standards.

Students cannot select two of the same menu items under offer versus serve (i.e., two entrees or two servings of the same vegetable) and have it count toward a reimbursable meal. Each menu item must be different.

Table 9 Section 12D. Identifying a Reimbursable Lunch for Nutrient Standard Menu Planning

The following menu was offered to students, and several different selection combinations were made. All selection examples represent a reimbursable lunch.

	Student					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Entrees (students may select one)						
Lasagna	X			X		
Macaroni and cheese			X		X	
Chicken Nuggets		X				X
Side Dish-Vegetables (students may select one)						
Green beans	X					
Oven-baked fries				X		X
Corn		X				
Rice					X	
Side Dish-Bread (students may select one)						
Rolls			X			
Garlic bread				X		
Bread Sticks						
Side Dish-Desserts (students may select one)						
Rice pudding						
Fruit cup					X	
Oatmeal cookies		X				
Milk (students may select one)						
1% chocolate			X			X
2% unflavored milk				X		
Skim milk	X				X	

Nutrition Goals

Menu planning is designed to meet or exceed the minimum nutrient levels for the various age groups. There are no minimum quantities established by the regulations for any menu item. The menu planner establishes what the entrees are and the serving sizes of the menu items.

Point of service Identification

For the purpose of identifying a reimbursable meal at the point of service, the menu planner will need to provide students and cashiers with details about the various combinations of menu items (including the various entrees) that may constitute a reimbursable meal.

If the school has a salad bar, the students may be given the option to make an “entree salad” or a “side salad” (a side dish menu item) from the various ingredients.

For example, students and cashiers need to be informed that the entree salad consists of two scoops of tuna or chicken salad plus a bowl of lettuce and other items. The side salad/menu item could be a bowl of lettuce and other vegetables or a bowl of fruit salad.

Substitutions

Occasionally it is necessary to make a substitution to a planned menu cycle for various reasons such as effective use of leftovers, food shortage, or improper delivery from vendors. The use of substitutions may:

- change the nutrient content of the meal and
- meals may no longer meet the Nutrient Standard.

When food substitutions are made due to an emergency situation (i.e., food shortage), it is impractical for menu planners to revise menus and recalculate nutrient amounts.

If the need for service of a substitute item or leftovers occurs two weeks before the week the original menu item is to be served, the week's menus will be reanalyzed and the Nutrient Standards (for the week) must be met with the substituted item. The two-week time span is the two-week period before the day of the menu item substitution.

If the need for a substitution is known two weeks or more before the menu date →→→→	• reanalyze menus and • meet the Nutrient Standard
If the need occurs within two-weeks of the date of the meal service→→→	• no reanalysis is required and • try to use a similar food as the substitute.

If the need for a substitution is known two weeks or more before the menu date:

- reanalyze and
- meet the Nutrient Standard.

If the need occurs within two-weeks of date of meal service:

- no reanalysis is required and
- try to use a similar food as the substitute.

If a food is substituted that is not a similar food according to the definition in this section, a reanalysis may be done but it is not required.

For the purposes of NuMenus, a similar food will mean that at the site level, the substitution:

- plays the same role in the meal (Entree, Milk, Side Dish) and
- is from the same food group.

Menu planners are encouraged to monitor the substitutions and reanalyze if in their judgment the Nutrient Standards would no longer be met. Examples of time frames requiring reanalysis are provided in Table 10, Section 12D.

Table 10 Section 12D. When to Reanalyze due to Menu Substitutions-Examples

Example 1.
The September 14 menu calls for orange wedges. No oranges are available. Your produce purveyor calls August 30 to inform you of the need to change and you decide to use apple wedges. Do you need to reanalyze the menu?

Yes. Since you know of the change prior to the two-week time frame before serving the menu, you must reanalyze the menu.

August							30	31	
September	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	

Example 2.
On September 18 there are 20 servings of rice left over. The cook freezes the leftovers. On September 24, the school runs out of rolls to serve with Baked Chicken. The cook reheats the leftover rice and serves it with chicken. Do you need to reanalyze the menu?

No. This was an emergency substitution of a similar food. There is no need to reanalyze.

Example 3.
The September 29 menu calls for Sausage and Cheese Pizza. The delivery arrives from the distributor on September 27. You have been shorted two cases of pizza, but they send two cases of Pepperoni Calzone as a substitution. Do you need to reanalyze the menu?

No. Because the menu planner did not know about the substitution two weeks in advance of the date of the menu and a similar food was served, there is no need to reanalyze.

September	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	

Example 4.
On October 14 the menu calls for Peach Cobbler. The day before, the baker burns the cobbler and it must be thrown out. The manager knows another menu item is required, but only has ice cream to substitute for the cobbler. Do you need to reanalyze the menu?

No. The substitution occurred within the two-week period. Although the menu item substituted is not a similar food, the menu does not need to be reanalyzed.

Questions & Answers

1. Q: Is it acceptable for a school to exceed the required nutrient standards?

A: Yes. USDA regulations specify the minimum nutrient level requirements for school lunches under Nutrient Standard Menu Planning, Assisted Nutrient Standard Menu Planning, Enhanced Food Based Menu Planning, and Traditional Food Based Menu Planning options, respectively. SFAs may plan menus under the Nutrient Standard, Enhanced Food Based Menu Planning or Traditional Food Based Menu Planning options, which exceed nutrient levels in the grade/age appropriate group (with the exception of nutrient levels for total fat and saturated fat, which are maximums based on the total calories planned). It is, however, important for schools to recognize the grade/age related nutrient needs of children and plan menus with appropriate levels of nutrients.

2. Q: If a school is using NuMenus, can they also use NuMenus for the Summer Food Service Program?

A: Yes, they can. Any SFA that is using NuMenus and also operates the Child and Adult Care Food Program and/or the Summer Food Service Program may, at its option and with State Agency (SA) approval, prepare meals provided for these programs using the NuMenus alternative.

3. Q: When using NuMenus, can a school combine preschool with grades K–7 and serve everyone the same amount of food?

A: No, this cannot be done. When more than one grade or age is outside of the established levels, the menu planner should use two of the required groups or develop a customized age group. When using NuMenus, the required grade groups for lunch include: Preschool, Grades K–6, Grades 7–12, plus an optional standard for grades K–3. The required grade groups for breakfast include: Preschool, Grades K–12, plus an optional standard for grades 7–12. Schools may also choose to use these optional age groups: Ages 3–6, Ages 7–10, Ages 11–13, and Ages 14–17. If only one age or grade is outside the established levels, a school or group of schools may use the Nutrient Standard levels for the majority of children. In the situation above, it is recommended that the preschool students be added to grades K–6 and another standard be used for students in grades 7–12, since the calorie and nutrient requirements of students in grades 7–12 are higher. There are also several other ways that this situation could be handled:

1) the SFA could choose to use the USDA age groupings for menu planning: Ages 3–6 (for preschool through first grade), ages 7–10 (for 2nd through 5th grade), and ages 11–13 (for 6th and 7th graders), to provide caloric and nutrient levels that are most appropriate to the children's nutritional needs or

2) the SFA could customize age grouping (there are plenty of options for custom age groupings). For example, they might choose ages 3–8 (preschool through 3rd grade) and ages 9–12 (4th grade through 7th grade).

Questions & Answers

(continued)

4 Q: Can a student who does not eat meat select a meat alternate as an entree when it is offered by the school as a side dish? If so, can a menu item serve as both an entree and a side dish?

A: No. A student is required to take an entree and may not choose a side dish in lieu of the entree. All SFAs should consider planning meatless entrees if members of the student body are interested in having this type of meal. SFAs could also offer beans, eggs, or cheese. In addition, they could offer entrees containing 100 percent Vegetable Protein Product (VPP) or entrees without meat in them, (for example, Pasta with Tomato Sauce).

The second part of this question asked if a menu item could serve as both an entree and a side dish. It is possible for a school to serve macaroni and cheese as an entree and then to also offer a smaller portion of macaroni and cheese as a side dish. If the school chose to do this, they would have to provide training to both students and school food service staff so that they would understand that the student could not choose macaroni and cheese both as an entree and as a side dish and have it count as two of the required menu items for offer versus serve (menu items must be different to be counted toward offer versus serve; two of the same item count only as one item).

5. Q: Can a school use Food Based Menu Planning for some meals and NuMenus for other meals?

A: Yes and no. That is, SFAs can use different menu planning systems for different schools in the SFA or for breakfast and lunch within a school, but cannot mix menu planning systems within the same meal service in one school. [Except under certain circumstances: For example, the SFA has central menus; they use NuMenus for elementary school menus (K-6) and Enhanced Food Based Menu Planning for high school menus (7-12). They can use the two systems in a K-12 school provided that meal services to the two groups are completely separate.]

Notes: